







W. C. Bryant.

BRYANT MEMORIAL MEETING

OF THE CENTURY

Tuesday Evening, November 12th, 1878

Century Rooms

NEW YORK

ON the 20th of June, 1878, the Board of Management of the CENTURY, resolved that a memorial meeting of its members should be held in honor of their late President, WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

A committee consisting of F. F. Marbury, John Bigelow, E. S. Van Winkle, D. Huntington, and A. R. Macdonough, was appointed to make arrangements to carry this resolution into effect.

The meeting was held on Tuesday Evening the 12th of November, 1878, at the rooms of the CENTURY, which were decorated for the occasion with numerous portraits of Mr. BRYANT and paintings illustrative of his works.

In pursuance of a resolution of the board, the proceedings of the meeting are now published.

Among the letters received, in answer to invitations to attend the meeting, the following in consideration of the age, the distinguished character of the writer,

and his personal relations with Mr. Brewster, deemed worthy of preservation.

Sheffield, November 9th, 1873

TO F. T. MARBURY, Esq.,

Dear Sir,

I ought to be present if I *could*—*if*, if my age and health could permit—at the Convention, on the approaching occasion, which it will devote to the memory of Brewster.

An acquaintance with him, not to say friendship, of nearly half a century, naturally makes me wish to listen to what will be spoken of him, and to the strains of poetry and music that will interpret, in some degree, our sorrow for his loss.

How clear from all question is the fitness of this commemoration of him!—There was nothing in his character, his writings, or his life to chill the breath of eulogy, or to check the flow of melioration—none in his praise.

I cannot use my pen to write any more, but to say that I am, with thanks for the invitation of your Committee,

Yours truly,

OSWELL DEWEY.

CATALOGUE OF PICTURES

UNBIBLED ME 1111

BRYANT MEMORIAL MEETING.

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| 1. | CHAS. H. MULLER | Sketch at Roslyn |
| | <i>"The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old."</i> | |
| 2. | R. W. HERRARD | Autumn |
| | <i>"The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old."</i> | |
| 3. | D. HUNTINGTON | Portrait of Thos. Cole |
| | <i>"The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old."</i> | |
| 4. | A. H. WADE | Landscape |
| | <i>"The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old."</i> | |
| 5. | S. F. B. MORE | Portrait of Bryant, 1835 |
| 6. | A. B. DEWAND | " " " |
| 7. | F. L. CLARE | " " " 1876 |
| 8. | S. R. GILFORD | Autumn Landscape |
| | <i>"The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old,
 The old, old, old, old, old, old, old, old."</i> | |
| 9. | THOMAS HILLS | Portrait of Bryant, 1845 |

10. J. F. CROPSEY Landscape.
"Aurora, rosy-fingered, looked abroad."
11. JERVIS MCENTEE "November."
*"There comes, from yonder height
 A soft repining sound,
 Where forest leaves are bright,
 And fall, like flakes of light,
 To the ground."*
12. E. L. HENRY "A Summer Morning."
13. S. R. GIFFORD Portrait of Bryant,—1860.
14. J. L. FITCH A Mountain Brook.
*"The rivulet
 Sends forth glad sounds, and
 Tripping o'er its bed
 Of pebbly sands, or leaping
 Down the rocks
 Seems, with continuous laughter,
 To rejoice
 In its own being."*
15. JERVIS MCENTEE "Autumn."
*"Oh Autumn! why so soon
 Depart the hues that make thy forests glad,
 Thy gentle wind and thy fair sunny noon,
 And leave thee wild and sad?"*
16. J. L. FITCH Forest Interior.
*"Father, thy hand
 Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
 Didst weave this verdant roof,
 Thou didst look upon the naked earth,
 And forthwith rose all these fair ranks of trees."*
17. G. H. HALL An Oven in Pompeii.
18. G. H. HALL Portrait of John Adams' Daughter—after
 Copley.
19. W. HOMER On the Seashore.
*"Seek'st thou the plashy brink
 Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
 Or where the rocking billows rise
 And sink
 On the chafed ocean side?"*

20. A. B. DURAND . . . Landscape—with Portrait Group of Bryant and Cole.

21. J. B. BRISTOL "Green River."

*"When breezes are soft and skies are fair,
I steal an hour from study and care,
And hie me away to the woodland scene
Where wanders the stream with waters of green."*

22. L. C. TIFFANY Scene in Chambers Street.

*"Oh! glide away from those abodes, that bring
Pollution to thy channel."*

23. J. D. SMILLIE Drawing.

"Know ye no sadness when the hurricane has swept," etc.

PROGRAM.

- 1 MUSIC *Overture to Goethe's "Egmont"* *Beethoven.*
 - 2 POEM . . . *BAYARD TAYLOR.*
 - 3 MUSIC *Traumerci* *Schumann.*
 - 4 ORATION . . . *JOHN BIGELOW.*
 - 5 MUSIC *Marche funèbre* *Chopin.*
 - 6 POEM . . . *R. H. STODDARD.*
 - 7 MUSIC *Nocturne* *Jungmann.*
 - 8 POEM . . . *E. C. STEDMAN.*
 - 9 MUSIC *Selection from "Tannhäuser"* *Wagner.*
-

Music under the direction of Prof. F. I. EBEN.

POEM BY BAYARD TAYLOR.

EPICEDIUM.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Read by A. R. MACDONOUGH.

I.

SAY, who shall mourn him first,
Who sang in days for Song so evil-starred,
Shielding from adverse winds the flame he nursed,—
Our Country's earliest Bard?
For all he sang survives
In stream, and tree, and bird, and mountain-crest,
And consecration of uplifted lives
To Duty's stern behest;
Till, like an echo falling late and far
As unto Earth the answer from a star,
Along his thought's so nigh unnoted track
Our people's heart o'ertakes
His pure design, and hears him, and awakes
To breathe its music back!
Approach, sad Forms, now fitly to employ
The grave sweet stops of all melodious sound,—
Yet undertoned with joy;
For him ye lose, at last is truly found.

II.

Scarce darkened by the shadow of these hours,
The Manitou of Flowers,
Crowned with the Painted-cup, that shakes
Its gleam of war-paint on his dusky cheek,
Goes by, but cannot speak ;
Yet tear, or dew-drop 'neath his coronal breaks,
And in his drooping hand
The azure eyelids of the gentian die
That loves the yellow autumn land ;
The wind-flower, golden rod,
With phlox and orchis, nod ;
And every blossom frail and shy
No careless loiterer sees,
But poet, sun and breeze,
And the bright countenance of our western sky.
They knew who loved them : they, if all
Forgot to dress his pall,
Or strew his couch of long repose,
Would from the prairies and the central snows
The sighing West-wind call,
Their withered petals—even as tears, to bear,
And, like a Niobe of air,
Upon his sea-side grave to let them fall !

III.

Next you, ye many Streams,
That make a music through his cold, green land!
Whether ye scour the granite slides
In broken spray-light or in sheeted gleams,
Or in dark basins stand,
Your bard's fond spirit in your own abides.
Not yours the wail of woe,
Whose joy is in your wild and wanton flow,—
Chill, beautiful Undines
That flash white hands behind your thicket-screens,
And charm the wildwood and the cloven flumes
To hide you in their glooms!
But he hath kissed you, and his lips betray
Your coyest secrets ; now, no more
Your bickering, winking tides shall stray
Through August's idle day,
Or showered with leaves from brown November's floor,
Untamed, and rich in mystery
As we were wont to be!
From where the dells of Graylock feed
Your thin, young life, to where the Sangamon
Breaks with his winding green the Western mead,
Delay to hasten on!
Ask not the clouds and hills

To swell the veins of your obedient rills,
 And brim your banks with turbid overflow ;
 But calmly, soothly go,
 Soft as a sigh and limpid as a tear,
 So that ye seem to borrow
 The voice and the visage of sorrow,
 For he gave you glory and made you dear !

IV.

Strong Winds and mighty Mountains, sovereign Sea,
 What shall your dirges be ?
 The slow, great billow, far down the shore,
 Booms in its breaking : “ Dare—and despair ! ”
 The fetterless winds, as they gather and roar,
 Are evermore crying : “ Where, oh where ? ”
 The mountain summits, with ages hoar,
 Say : “ Near and austere, but far and fair ! ”
 Shall ye in your sorrow droop,
 Who are strong and sad, and who cannot stoop ?
 Two may sing to him where he lies,
 But the third is hidden behind the skies.
 Ye cannot take what he stole,
 And made his own in his inmost soul !
 The pulse of the endless Wave
 Beauty and breadth to his strophes gave ;
 The Winds with their hands unseen

Held him poised at a height serene ;
 And the world that wooed him, he smiled to o'ercome it ;
 Whose being the Mountains made so strong,—
 Whose forehead arose like a sunlighted summit
 Over eyes that were fountains of thought and song !

v.

And last, ye Forms, with shrouded face
 Hiding the features of your woe,
 That on the fresh sod of his burial-place
 Your myrtle, oak and laurel throw,—
 Who are ye?—whence your silent sorrow?
 Strange is your aspect, alien your attire :
 Shall we, who knew him, borrow
 Your unknown speech for Grief's august desire?
 Lo! one, with lifted brow
 Says, "Nay, he knew and loved me : I am Spain!"
 Another, "I am Germany,
 Drawn sadly nearer now
 By songs of his and mine that make one strain,
 Though parted by the world-dividing sea!"
 And from the hills of Greece there blew
 A wind that shook the olives of Peru,
 Till all the world that knew,
 Or, knowing not, shall yet awake to know
 The sweet humanity that fused his song,—

The haughty challenge unto Wrong,
 And for the trampled Truth his fearless blow,—
 Acknowledged his exalted mood
 Of faith achieved in song-born solitude,
 And give him high acclaim
 With those who followed Good, and found it Fame!

VI.

Ah, no!—why should we mourn
 The noble life that wore its crown of years?
 Why drop these tender, unavailing tears
 Upon a fate of no fulfilment shorn?
 He was too proud to seek
 That which should come unasked; and came,
 Kindling and brightening as a wind-blown flame
 When he had waited long,
 And life—but never art—was weak,
 But youthful will and sympathy were strong
 In white-browed eye and hoary-bearded cheek;
 Until, when called at last
 That later life to celebrate,
 Wherein, dear Italy, for thine estate,
 The glorious Present joined the glorious Past,
 He fell, and ceased to be!
 We could not yield him grandlier than thus,

When, for thy hero speaking, he
Spake equally for us !—
His last word, as his first, was Liberty !
His last word, as his first, for Truth
Struck to the heart of age and youth :
He sought her everywhere,
In the loud city, forest, sea and air :
He bowed to wisdom other than his own,
To wisdom and to law,
Concealed, or dimly shown
In all he knew not, all he knew and saw,
Trusting the Present, tolerant of the Past,
Firm-faithed in what shall come
When the vain noises of these days are dumb ;
And his first word was noble as his last.

ORATION

BY

JOHN BIGELOW.

WHEN Dante was invited by the Council of his native city to undertake a conciliatory embassy to the pontifical court at Rome, he is said to have replied after some hesitation, but with that frankness which is one of the prerogatives of genius :

If I go, who remains ?

If I remain, who goes ?

Before many who hear me were born, our lamented colleague, in memory of whom we are assembled this evening, occupied an eminence which placed his country in a not dissimilar dilemma.

And now that he is gone we may ask with no feigned humility, Who remains ? Who shall now strike that lyre to which for more than three generations Nature has been confiding the secrets of her heavenly parentage.

Who shall henceforth be our daily evening counsellor and occupy among us that seat of authority which, like Job, “ he prepared in the street ; in awe of whom the young men hid themselves, the aged arose and stood up, the princes refrained from talking and laid their hands upon their mouths ? ”

Who remains to lend *his* dignity of character and graces of discourse to those great occasions when a national expression was to be given to national emotions ?

Who shall fill his place in this bereaved circle of which from its birth he was the charm, the ornament and the pride ?

That he cannot be here to-night to weave the wreath of cyprus for that tomb to which we have so recently consigned his mortal remains, brings home to the CENTURY a new sense of the irreparable loss it has sustained ; of the extent to which it is impoverished.

In consenting to be one of the interpreters of the emotions of this assembly in which BRYANT was so intimately and thoroughly known, I feel that I shall meet all your just expectations, if I submit to you some of the more durable impressions which our late revered associate left upon my mind during an acquaintance of nearly forty years ; leaving to a more impartial speaker, and perhaps to a more impartial tribunal, the re-

sponsible task of defining the rank he is ultimately to take among those who have been conspicuous in moulding the opinions and shaping the destinies of men.

BRYANT was six years older than the century ; of noble birth, for both his parents were descended from passengers in the *Mayflower*. He began to distil the lessons of life into popular verse while yet a child, and while most boys are wrestling with the elementary laws of grammar and numeration.

At eighteen he had produced a poem of which no poet of any age would have disclaimed to be the author. He was then recently admitted to the bar of his native state, to which calling his fellow citizens added the responsibilities of a Justice of the Peace. But he had already "conversed with promises." The fame which the publication of "Thanatopsis" in 1816, and the "Ages" in 1821, had secured him, had opened to his vision a wider horizon.

An impression has prevailed that BRYANT quit the profession of the law doubting his fitness to succeed in it ; that he was too shy, too fond of seclusion and too indisposed to the aggressive and contentious sort of life through which the higher rewards of that profession are commonly attained. I shall take the liberty of saying that I do not share this

opinion. I do not think that he quit the bar from any mistrust of his ability to succeed as a lawyer, but because he foresaw a speedier and a greater success within his reach. At the early age at which he forsook the profession, he could not in the nature of things have acquired any considerable reputation in it, while as a poet he was already famous. In the law he was still planting, while as a writer, the harvest was ripe and ready for his sickle.

I do not know of any one qualification for success in many of the various departments of the legal profession, with which Mr. BRYANT was not eminently equipped. Because his genius lifted him while yet a boy to a sphere where he had to deal with the struggles of mankind, it by no means follows that he could have dealt less successfully with the contests of individual men : He had a prodigious power of acquiring knowledge, which made him one of the most accomplished men of his age ; a mind singularly clear and difficult to sophisticate ; habits of industry which would appall most men who think themselves industrious, and a devotion to duty and a fidelity to engagements which would have inspired the unlimited confidence of courts, juries and clients. All these qualities are too rarely united in any person to leave a doubt that they would have given BRYANT a relative eminence at the

bar as incontestible as that which he was destined to obtain in literature.

It was natural that the writer of the two best poems which, up to that time, had been produced in our country, should attract the notice of the publishers, whose glasses are always ranging the horizon in quest of new stars of which they may appropriate the radiance. The result was an invitation, of which without much hesitation BRYANT availed himself, to come to New York and become one of the editors of the *New York Review and Athenæum Magazine*. In this early putting off the grub and putting on the butterfly, the bar lost one whom I will persist in thinking might have become one of its greatest ornaments, but lost it only as the meadow parts with its grasses that they may become the constituents of a higher organized life.

Mr. BRYANT took up his residence in New York and the profession to which he was to give dignity and distinction, in the winter of 1824-5, and in the thirtieth year of his age. In making this change he showed an accuracy in measuring his forces for which he was noted through life. He at once set in the clouds that bow of promise at the feet of which fortune and fame are buried. The very first number of his new magazine contained two poems which even

now would establish the character of any periodical enterprise, the "Marco Bozarus" of Halleck and his own "Song of Pitcairns Island." The latter verses, which a journalist of the time fitly styled "one of the sweetest pictures that a highly cultivated fancy ever drew," I have reason to believe was always as great a favorite with its author as with its readers.

But Mr. BRYANT was always too faithful to his pilgrim lineage, too earnest in his convictions, too deeply interested in the great social and political problems of his time, "to dream away his years in the arms of the muses, like Endymion in the embrace of the moon." Another change awaited him. In the following year, 1826, he was invited to share in the editorship of the *Evening Post* of this city, a daily paper, like himself a few years older than the current century, founded under the political auspices of Alexander Hamilton, and always exerting an important influence in the country. The only conditions which Mr. BRYANT attached to his acceptance of the position, I have heard him say, was the privilege of advocating a removal of needless restrictions upon commerce and a separation of government moneys from the banking capital of the country. These conditions proved no obstacle to an arrangement, neither of the parties dreaming at the time, I presume, that he was taking

a step which was to associate their journal, for the next quarter of a century, with the fortunes of a political party which it had been founded to oppose, and if possible destroy.

From this time forth, and until the close of his long life, a period of fifty-two years, and covering the administrations of nine Presidents, Mr. BRYANT continued in the editorship of the *Evening Post*. He never engaged in any other business enterprise ; he never embarked in any financial speculations ; he was never an officer of any other financial or industrial corporation, nor did he ever accept any political office or trust. He had found an employment at last that was entirely congenial to him, and one, as Dr. Bellows has wisely said, which "most fully economised his temperament and faculties for the public service ;" and he was as loyal to his profession as it was to him. I think it quite safe to say that for five days out of every week during at least forty-two of his fifty-two years of editorial service, Mr. BRYANT was at his editorial desk before eight o'clock in the morning, and left the daily impress of his character and genius in some form upon the columns of his journal. When the length of his career as editor is considered, it may be assumed that Mr. BRYANT was one of the most voluminous prose writers that ever lived, and to this audience I need

hardly add one of the best. It would be difficult to name a single topic of national importance, or which has occupied any considerable share of public attention during the last half century, upon which BURANT did not find occasion to form and publish an opinion, an opinion too, which always commanded the respect, if not the adhesion of his readers.

Though journalism is a comparatively modern profession, it is already divided into schools, two of which are well defined. One aims to daguerreotype the events and humors of the day, whatever they may be; the other, to direct and shape those events and humors to special standards. One is merely a reflector of what passes across its field; the other, a lens converging the news of the day like the rays of light in specific directions. One is the school of the real and the other of the ideal. A journal of the former class, of which the *London Times* and the *New York Herald* are perhaps the most distinguished specimens to-day, is essentially an ephemeron. Each day's publication is complete, having no necessary dependence upon any publication preceding or to follow it. It is simply the living body of that portion of time which has elapsed since its previous issue. It masquerades with its readers in the idolatry or passion of to-day, and to-morrow perhaps with them it clothes itself in the sack-

cloth and ashes of repentance. The other school aims to control and direct society: to teach and to lead it: to tell not so much what it has been doing as what it ought to do or to have done. As such it must be consistent with itself and teach its doctrines in their purity, irrespective of the fluctuations of public opinion.

It was to the latter school of journalism that Mr. BARANT belonged. The amelioration of society was the warp with which he was always striving to interweave the woof of current events.

I will not undertake to say which of these two schools of journalism is the more useful. Both are useful: neither can be spared: but they invite very different orders of mind and a very different range of accomplishments. I doubt if the school to which Mr. BARANT belonged, and of which Coleridge and Southey were conspicuous ornaments in their earlier years, ever had his superior: if it ever had a pen in its service which wrote so admirably as much that was sound and profitable, with so little that was neither sound nor profitable.

It is possible that his power as a journalist might have been increased by a larger intercourse with the world. During the more active stages of his professional career he saw comparatively few people save those who sought him at his office, and these consisted

largely, of course, of those who had personal ends to serve by the visit. This isolation made it so much easier for designing men to disguise the antipathies, prejudices and selfishness which often prompted their suggestions. A larger commerce with the world would have rectified erroneous impressions sometimes left upon his mind by this class of parasites, who usually approached him on the moral side of his nature, because it was the most impressionable.

Though accustomed daily for more than half a century to discuss professionally the doings of our Federal and State Governments, he was never at Washington or at Albany, I believe, but once, except as a traveller passing through those capitals to some remoter point. I once urged him to visit Washington during an important crisis in our struggle for free labor and free speech. He declined, assigning as a reason that he had been there once;—I think it was during the administration of President Van Buren—and found that he was more content with the judgment he formed in his office, of the doings at the seat of Government than with any he was able to form under the shadow of the Capitol. He shrunk too from the restraints which personal intercourse with the public servants imposed upon the freedom of his pen. According to his view, a journalist did less than his duty who did

not strive at least to leave the world better than he found it; who did not wrestle with those social and political abuses which are amenable to public opinion. The reform of society, like Mahomed's paradise, lies in the shadow of crossed swords. Controversy therefore, always earnest and sometimes acrimonious with those whom he regarded as the Amorites, the Hivites and the Perrizites of the land was inevitable. He shrank to the verge of rudeness from all social, professional or political entanglements which in any way threatened his freedom of speech or the equilibrium of his judgment. He had no personal antagonisms, but he could not compromise or transact with those whom he regarded as the enemies of society.

This jealousy of his independence accounted in part for the fact that he never held any political office. The conditions which usually attach to political honors in our country are hardly consistent with the judicial attitude which a journalist of the BRYANT school professes to occupy, and sooner or later must interfere with his freedom of discussion on the one hand, or with that loyalty to his party which is a more or less important element of his power on the other. No one knew better than Mr. BRYANT that the beneficiary or dependent of a party is not in a position to criticise or defend it with authority.

In 1874, while a guest of Governor Tilden a few days at Albany, he was tendered a complimentary reception from both branches of the legislature. On his return I asked him if that was not the first official attention he had ever received from any federal, state, or municipal body. He said it was. We had then both forgotten what I believe to be the single exception. While absent on the second of his three visits to the Old World, he was elected a Regent of the University of the State of New York. The mail following that which bore the intelligence, brought me the following letter :

PARIS, July 9th, 1858.

TO JOHN BIGELOW, ESQ.:

MY DEAR SIR—I learn, through the newspapers, that I have been elected by the New York Legislature a Regent of the University. I will not affect to undervalue the favorable opinion of so respectable a public body, manifested in so spontaneous a manner, without the least solicitation on the part of my friends, and I beg that this letter may be used as an expression of my best thanks.

There are, however, many motives which make it necessary for me to decline the appointment, and among these are my absence from the country, the inconvenience of combining the duties of the place with the pursuits in which I am engaged when at home, and my aversion to any form of public life now, by my long habit made, I fear invincible. I therefore desire by this letter to return the appointment to the kind hands which have sought to confer it upon me, confident that some worthier person will easily be found, who will bring the necessary alacrity to the performance of its duties.

I am, dear sir, very truly yours,

W. C. BRYANT.

This letter recalls the reply which Mr. Faraday, one of the master spirits of the Victorian Age, gave to his friend Tyndall, who had urged him to accept the Presidency of the Royal Society : "Tyndall," said he, "I must remain plain Michael Faraday to the last ; and let me now tell you that if I accepted the honor which the Royal Society desires to confer upon me, I would not answer for the integrity of my intellect a single year."

Whether Mr. BRYANT ever mistrusted the integrity of his intellect, no one probably but the Master knows, but that the struggle to maintain its integrity as a journalist while wearing the chains and livery of office, would be much more severe and that, as a dependent of government his word would be deprived of much of its power, and that these were considerations which had great weight in determining him to give to his journal an undivided allegiance, no one who knew him well, can for one moment doubt.

But his lack of official distinction had its compensations. No one of equal eminence probably ever suffered less than BRYANT from the envy and jealousy of others, and mainly because he never sought nor accepted honors which others coveted.

Petrarch lived to bewail the zeal with which, in the youth of his fame, he sought the laurel crown at

Rome. "Had I been more advanced in years," he said, "I should have refused it. This crown has neither made me more learned, nor more eloquent, it has deprived me of repose and filled me with distrust." To all such repinings, I take no risk in saying, that BRYANT was utterly a stranger.

But there were other considerations which no doubt had their weight in keeping his name out of the list of competitors for official honors. No man's greatness ever appears more lustrous than when declining distinctions which are the common objects of ambition. Long before he had achieved any rank as a political journalist, he had attained a reputation as a man of letters to which public station could add very little, if anything. There is a wise old proverb, that any man can afford to go on foot who leads his horse. Earl Russell could afford to decline a resting place in Westminster Abbey, with the ancestral vault of the Bedfords awaiting him at the Chenies. It required no great effort of self denial for Béranger to decline a seat in the Academy, and what he termed the *brimborions* of the Legion of Honor, to remain the poet of the French Revolution, under the magic of whose melodious incantations thrones were tottering and dynasties were returning to the dust from which they sprang. Long before BRYANT had achieved any rank as a

political journalist, he was justified in the belief that his reputation was already of a finer texture than any of our political looms could weave.

At the funeral of one of the Caesars, who was a sister of Brutus and widow of Cassius, Tacitus tells us that as a mark of special distinction, Tiberius directed the statues of twenty of the most illustrious families of Rome to be borne in the procession. But, says the inexorable historian, Brutus and Cassius outshone them all by reason of their statues not being among them. *Sed præfulgebant Cassius atque Brutus eo ipso quod effigies eorum non visebantur.**

Whether Tiberius could as well afford their absence, and whether our country could as well afford to deprive itself of the weight of Mr. BRYANT's great name and character in its administrative councils, are questions which this is not a suitable occasion to discuss.

With Mr. BRYANT's accomplishments as an artist, and his wide range of faculties for literary work, there is still one key without which it is impossible to reach the secret of his influence, whether as a poet, a journalist, a citizen or a companion. I refer to his wonderfully complete moral organization. He was one of the most truthful men I ever knew. Not only was his

* Annales Lib. 3, LXXVI.

speech truthful, but his silence was truthful. What he did, and what he did not do; what he said and what he did not say, alike bore testimony to the uprightness of his character. Like Milton, he was very sparing of praise, hence the great value which his praise always possessed. His memorial discourses on Irving, and Cooper, and Halleck, and Verplanck, are models in all respects, but especially in their truthful discrimination of the qualities for which those founders of our literature were respectively distinguished. He did not arraign their poverty by ascribing to either merits he did not possess.

Plutarch tells us of a Roman judge refusing to act upon the testimony of a single witness in a case where the law required the testimony of two witnesses. "No," said the judge, "not even if Cato himself were the witness." This country has probably produced no person to whose truthfulness a similar homage from the bench would seem less inappropriate than to BRYANT. A statement from him required no sanction. His profound conscientiousness too, invested his character with an atmosphere in which no unworthy or degrading purpose could breathe or exist for a moment. And here lay the secret of a personal dignity which with him was more than majestic. Though with his friends one of the most genial and to all the

world the most unpretending of men, one would as soon think of taking a liberty with the Pope as with BRYANT.

The impression he left upon strangers when first presented to him was apt to be chilling. Though never unkind, his manner in such cases was not responsive. His greetings were discouraging, especially to the numbers whose admiration for him had been feeding for years upon an ideal shaped from his works, and who regarded an introduction to him as an epoch in their lives. This apparent want of cordiality did not result from insensibility, nor wholly from his constitutional aversion to be lionized, but rather from an unwillingness to express in any way a greater degree of interest than he felt. As soon as acquaintance ripened a feeling of greater cordiality, his manner betrayed it, but always within the limits of the strictest truthfulness. He spoke and lived

"As ever in his great task Master's eye,"

and expecting to account for every word he uttered.

Whoever will adopt the same lofty rule in his intercourse with the world, will soon find the true explanation of much that in BRYANT was attributed to a cold and unsympathetic treatment. He took little note of any but moral distinctions among men. Mere worldly rank impressed him less than almost any man I ever

knew. I was once his guest at Roslyn with a foreigner of some distinction, who at the close of the first repast after our arrival, presumed upon the privilege accorded to persons of his rank at home to rise first and dismiss the table. Mr. BRYANT joined me on our way to the parlor, and with an expression of undisguised astonishment asked me, "Did you see that?" I replied that I did, and with a view of extenuating the gentleman's offense as much as I could, said that he evidently thought he only was exercising one of the recognized prerogatives of his order. "Well," he said, "he will have no opportunity of repeating it here;" and he was as good as his word, for during the remainder of our sojourn, no one was left in doubt whose prerogative it was in that house to dismiss the table. Some weeks later he alluded to this incident and quoted from a conversation he had once held with Fenimore Cooper, his strictures upon this exasperating assumption of the titled classes in some communities of the old world. He was willing that others should adopt any standard that pleased them best, by which to rate their fellows, himself included, but he would not accept directly or indirectly for himself any other standard than that which, so far as he knew, his Maker would apply.

AS BRYANT, from the day he embarked in journal-

ism, continued a journalist until the close of his life, from a yet earlier period of his life to its close he never ceased to be a poet ; reminding us of Cowley's remark that it is seldom seen that the poet dies before the man. But BRYANT never confounded the two vocations in any way, or allowed either to interfere to any appreciable extent with the other. They constituted two separate and distinct currents of intellectual life, one running through the other if you please, but never mixing with it, as the gulf-stream winds its way through the broad Atlantic, though always distinguished from it by its higher temperature. None of the more vulgar considerations of authorship ever operated upon his muse so far as I was ever able to discern. He never sang for money ; neither did he use his poetical gifts for worldly or professional ends. He used his feet for walking and he used his wings for flying, but he never attempted to fly with his feet nor to run with his wings. He earned his bread, and he fought the battle of life with his journal, but he made no secret of the fact that he looked to his verses for the perpetuation of his name ; when he put on his singing robes he practically withdrew from the world and went up into a high mountain, where the din and clamor of professional life in which he habitually dwelt, was inaudible. On those occasions

“ His soul was like a star and dwelt apart.”

When the semi-centennial anniversary of the *Evening Post* was approaching, I proposed to him to prepare for its columns a sketch of its career. He cheerfully accepted the task, and in order that he might be free from interruption, I recommended him to go down to his country-home at Roslyn and remain there until it was finished, and let me send him there such of the files of the paper as he might have occasion to consult. He rejected the proposal as abruptly as if I had asked him to offer sacrifices to Apollo. He would allow no such work to follow him there. Not even the shadow of his business must fall upon the consecrated haunts of his muse. He rarely brought or sent anything from the country for the *Evening Post*; but if he did, it was easy to detect in the character of the fish that they had been caught in strange waters. This separation of his professional from his poetical life must be taken into account in any effort to explain the uniform esteem in which he was always held as a poet by his country people, while, not unfrequently, one of the least popular of journalists. I have heard his verses quoted in public meetings during the earlier stages of the anti-slavery controversy, where if he had appeared in person he could have scarcely escaped outrage. No poet of eminence probably had less of the benefit of adverse criticism, while as a journalist

he was almost always embattled. I can recall but a single instance in which his verses became the subject of a controversy, and in that, he was, strictly speaking, neither the provoker of the controversy nor a party to it. Because of its exceptional character, I need offer no apology for quoting from his memorial discourse on Washington Irving, the language with which he himself saw fit to rescue the incident from oblivion.

"I should have mentioned, and I hope I may do so without much egotism, that when a volume of my poems was published here in 1832, Mr. Verplanck had the kindness to send a copy of it to Irving, desiring him to find a publisher for it in England. This he readily engaged to do, though wholly unacquainted with me, and offered the volume to Murray. 'Poetry does not sell at present,' said Murray, and declined it. A bookseller in Bond Street, named Andrews, undertook its publication, but required that Irving should introduce it with a preface of his own. He did so, speaking of my verses in such terms as would naturally command the attention of the public, and allowing his name to be placed on the title-page as the editor. The edition in consequence found a sale. It happened however that the publisher objected to two lines in a poem entitled the 'Song of Marion's Men.' One of them was

'The British soldier trembles,'

and Irving good naturedly consented that it should be altered to

'The foeman trembles in his camp.'

The other alteration was of a similar character.

To the accusations of the *Plainsdealer* Irving replied with a mingled spirit and dignity, which almost makes us regret that his faculties were not oftener roused into energy by such collisions, or at least that he did not sometimes employ his pen on controverted points. He fully vindicated himself in both instances, showing that he had made the alterations in my poem, from a simple desire to do me service. * * * In his answer to the *Plainsdealer*, some allusions were made to me which seemed to imply that I had taken part in this attack. To remove this impression, I sent a note to the *Plainsdealer* for publication, in which I declared in substance that I never had complained of the alterations of my poems—that though they were not such as I should have made, I was certain they were made with the kindest intentions, and that I had no feeling toward Mr. Irving but gratitude for the service he had rendered me. The explanation was graciously accepted, and in a brief note in the *Plainsdealer* Irving pronounced my acquittal."

To judge of a poet, said Ben Johnson, is not the faculty of all poets, but only of the best. I gladly avail myself of so high an authority for saying nothing of BRYANT'S rank and quality as a poet save what may with propriety be said by one who cannot pretend to be even a poor poet.

BRYANT sprang into the world as a poet full grown. His muse had no adolescence. As with Pindar, the bees swarmed in his mouth while yet a child. At eighteen he took his place as the first poet of the country, but not to realize the too common fate of such rare precocity, and fall a prey to the envy of the gods, as Dryden puts it, who

"When their gifts too lavishly are placed
Soon they regret and will not make them last."

There is no evidence that BRYANT'S genius ever suffered from prematurity of development. He never wrote a poem from the day that "Thanatopsis" appeared until his death that was unworthy of his best, and the cadences yet linger in the air of those impressive lines with which he commemorated the last birthday of the hero of our Republic. Was there ever a more meritorious poem written by a youth of eighteen than "Thanatopsis?" Was there ever a nobler, a more Homeric thought more exquisitely set to verse by an octogenarian than is developed in the three last stanzas, which I offer no apology for reciting from his

last printed poem, entitled, "The 22d of February,"¹⁰
the birthday of Washington?

Lo where beneath an icy shield,
Calmly the mighty Hudson flows;
By snow that fell and frozen fell
Broadening the mighty river's ooze.

The wildest storm that sweeps through space,
And rends the oak with sudden force,
Can rattle no ringle in his face,
Or slacken his majestic course.

Thus 'till the wreck of time shall live
Unmarred, unlimed, our hero's fame,
And years succeeding years shall give
Increase of honors to his name.

No one will deny that in one respect, at least, BRYANT'S fame was entirely unique. He was the author of the finest verses ever produced by any one so young and so old as the author of "Thanatopsis" and of "The 22d of February."

Because he treated his poetic vocation not as a business but as an apostolate, BRYANT, though an accepted writer of verse for nearly three quarters of a century, was one of the least voluminous of the eminent poets. He published only about 166 original poems averaging 60 lines each. This would give about two poems, or only 151 lines a year, which seems very little for one so complete a master of all the arts of versification, to whom the reduction

of his thoughts to poetic measure was only a pastime.

Like Horace, like Burns, like Béranger, but unlike most other poets of celebrity, BRYANT wrote no long poems. I once asked him why. He replied, "There is no such thing as a long poem." His theory was that a long poem was as impossible as a long ecstasy ; that what is called a long poem, like "Paradise Lost" and the "Divine Comedy," is a mere succession of poems strung together upon a thread of verse ; the thread of verse serving sometimes to popularize them by adapting them to a wider range of literary taste, or a more sluggish intellectual digestion.

As a consequence of the severe conscientiousness which ruled his tongue and consecrated his pen, BRYANT never wrote a poem which was not winged with a high moral purpose. He never degraded his gift of song to the glorification of any of the lusts of the flesh, the pride of the eye or the pride of life ; he never wrote an erotic or bacchanalian song ; he never burned incense upon the altars of transient popular idols. He never exchanged praise for money or honors, "nor opened a shop for condolence or congratulation." There is perhaps no feature of BRYANT'S poetry that more faithfully reflects the completeness and admirable proportions of the man than their freedom from what is transient and perishable ; from what

is born of the passion, the prejudice, or the weakness of the hour ; from everything wearing the livery of the period. Following his own advice to the poet, slightly paraphrased,

He let no empty gust
Of passion find an utterance in *his* lay,
A blast that whirls the dust
Along the crowded street and dies away ;
But feelings of calm power and mighty sweep,
Like currents journeying through the windless deep.

As water in crystalizing excludes all foreign ingredients, and out of acids, alkalies and other solutions yields a crystal of perfect purity and sweetness, so his thoughts in passing into verse seemed to separate themselves from everything that was transient or vulgar. His poems have come to us as completely freed from every trace of what is of the earth earthy as if, like St. Luke's pictures, they had received their finishing touch from the angels.

BRYANT'S muse lacked those qualities which insure a prompt and general popularity. It was owing less I think to a lack in himself of the qualities necessary to secure immediate acceptance, than to the presence of qualities which consecrated his muse to more exalted uses. He had an exquisite humor, but it was the servant of his thought and not its master ; no one could tell a story better, but his stories were only the accessories to opinions of greater moment, the blossoms in-

cident to fruiting. Who shall say that with his wonderful mastery of the poetic art, had he been disposed, he might not have been the popular satirist of the day, or the sentimental favorite of the salon ; that he might not have excelled as a writer of amorous and bacchanalian verse, and like too many of our English classics, have made himself the idol of the drinking saloon and the brothel. The fact that he never prostituted his muse to any such base uses, only proves that his aims were higher ; that he wished to be the interpreter of universal truth, not of transitory opinions ; to elevate and purify, rather than to amuse ; to quicken our nobler sensibilities, rather than be simply the interpreter of our baser natures ; and in short he attached more value to the solemn verdict of posterity than to the freakish applause of contemporaries. Enough praise has never been given to what poets of genius have sometimes forborne to write. Dr. Johnson in one of his most thoughtful communications to the *Idler*, assigns some reasons for the comparatively short-lived popularity of *Hudibras*, the wittiest satire that was ever penned, which will explain what I venture to predict will be the more enduring fame of the poems of BRYANT :

“He that writes upon general principles or delivers universal truths, may hope to be often read, because his work will be equally useful at all times and in every country ; but he cannot hope to be received with eagerness or to spread

with rapidity ; that which is to be loved long must be loved with reason rather than with passion. He that lays out his labors upon temporary subjects, easily finds readers and quickly loses them ; for what should make the book valued when the subject is no more ?

“ These observations will show the reason why the poem of *Hudibras* is almost forgotten, however embellished with sentiments and diversified with allusions ; however bright with wit and however solid with truth. The hypocrisy which is detected and the folly which is ridiculed, have long vanished from public notice. Those who had felt the mischief of discord and the tyranny of usurpation, read it with rapture, for every line brought back to memory something known and gratified resentment by the just censure of something hated. But the book that was once quoted by princes, and which supplied conversation to all the assemblies of the gay and witty, is now seldom mentioned, and even by those who affect to mention it, it is seldom read ; so vainly is wit lavished upon fugitive topics ; so little can architecture secure duration when the ground is false.”*

There are few if any poems in the collected edition of BRYANT’S works which ought not to be as true, as readable and as edifying a thousand years hence as the day they were printed, and, what can be said of few poets with equal truth, as the world grows better, there is every reason to presume that his poetry will be more highly and widely esteemed.

BRYANT was a philosopher as well as a poet, and finds his most appreciative readers among those whose life has passed beyond the sensuous to the reflective stage. The number who comprehend the full force of his poems at a single reading is comparatively small. Every one of his verses will bear the supreme test of a work of literary art, which discloses a wider horizon and new merits at each successive perusal.

* *Idler* No. 50.

There seemed to be no waste about Mr. BRYANT's life, and in that respect he was a phenomenon. He never put off till the morrow the duty of to-day. He was the most punctilious of men about engagements, no matter how trifling their character or humble the person or purpose to be served. He seemed to have every moment of his time wisely appropriated, and every faculty of his being always employed to the maximum of its capacity. His pleasures and recreations, of which he secured a reasonable share, were always made more or less tributary to the symmetry of his genius and character. So wisely were his habits of life regulated, and so perfect his self-discipline, that he was always in the mood for his work. He is the only man I ever knew who seemed to have as much capacity for literary labor one day as another; every day as any day.

I once asked him how it happened that in a profession generally so fatal to the higher qualities of style because of the haste in which much of its work has to be done, he had managed for more than half a century to preserve his style in such purity and perfection. "If my style has fewer defects than you expect," he said, "it is for the reason, I suppose, which Dr. Johnson gave Boswell for conversing so well: I always write my best." "But," I said, "there

are daily emergencies when there is no time to choose words and be dainty, when the alternative is a hasty article or none at all." "I would sooner the paper would go to press without an editorial article than send to the printer one I was not satisfied with," was his reply.

Pope excused himself to one of his correspondents for neglect of style and method in his familiar letters, on the ground that he was writing to a friend. I will venture to say that BRYANT never offered or needed any such excuse for himself, and that he never wrote a note to his grocer or butcher, that in so far as its form and expression were concerned, was not as faultless as if it had been written for the press.

Of all the great writers of English, I know of none in whose works will be found so few words used improperly, or so few improper words. BRYANT's marvellous mastery of his native tongue has been often celebrated, and yet though persuasive and convincing, I don't remember that he was ever eloquent. Even in conversation he was never fervid.

Dr. Johnson makes it a reproach to Pope that he wrote his translation of the Iliad upon the backs of old letters. Mr. BRYANT rarely wrote for the *Evening Post* upon anything else, not as Johnson intimated in

the case of Pope, from a penny wise and pound foolish parsimony, but from a principle which was one of the logical consequences of his theory of human responsibility. His table was filled with old letters on their way to the paper mill. They were as serviceable for his editorial work as if they were fresh from it. He used them because he believed that everybody in the world was made the poorer by everything that is wasted, and no one so much as he who wastes, for he experiences a waste of character as well as of property.

I have said that BRYANT was a philosopher, but he was not in the least metaphysical. He came into possession of the most profound and important truths, by sheltering his judgment from worldly and selfish influences, and by extirpating all evil and unworthy proclivities. By making his soul a fitting dwelling-place, wisdom sought its hospitality. But he trusted himself rarely to the open sea of speculation. His mind was perfectly inaccessible to crotchets. When he went to war he always equipped himself with proved weapons. Yet he was always open to new ideas, and the farthest in the world from believing that man had reached the limits of knowledge in any direction. No man ever had a profounder sense of responsibility for what he taught; and while he listened patiently when necessary to the dreams and specula-

tions of enthusiasts, he never asked any such indulgence from his readers. He never professed to be wiser than everybody else, nor to see farther. He never shocked the most simple-minded of his readers by startling novelties in thought or expression. He never plucked truths before they were ripe. He never confounded the chemist's laboratory with the kitchen, nor served his readers' table with the products of the crucible, or the retort.

It could be said of BRYANT, if of any man, that he had no vices. Neither had he any time-wasting habits. He never consciously indulged any appetite or taste to the prejudice of his health or of any duty. Without being in the least an ascetic, or foregoing any of the legitimate pleasures of the table, he had occasion to lose no time in repairing forces exhausted by any species of excess. I could not conceive of his indulging in anything which he even suspected might impair his mental, moral or physical efficiency, merely because it gave a transient gratification. He never seemed to exercise self-denial, so completely had it become the law of his life to do what appeared to him best to be done. This was the secret of his almost miraculous health, which preserved him in the full enjoyment of all his faculties up to his last illness, and which enabled him, after he was seventy years of age,

to associate his name imperishably with the greatest of epic poets, by the least imperfect English translation of the Iliad and Odyssey that has yet been made.

I am warranted in saying, that until the distressing accident which terminated his days, he was never disabled by sickness within the memory of any person now living.

"In years he seemed but not impaired by years."

His health responded so faithfully to the inexorable loyalty of his character, as to go far towards justifying Buffon's theory, that the normal life of man is an hundred years, and that it is due, not to the use but the abuse of his organization, if he finds an earlier grave.

Meeting him some years ago and after a somewhat prolonged separation, I asked him particularly about his health. He said it was so perfect he hardly dared to speak of it. He was not conscious from one week to another, he said, of a physical sensation that he would have different; and was forgetting that he was liable to disease and decay. I asked him for his secret. He replied that he did not know that there was any secret about it, but he supposed he owed much of his health to a habit formed in early life, of devoting the first hour and a half or two hours after leaving his bed in the morning, to moderate gymnastic exercise, after which he took a bath and a light break-

fast, consisting usually of milk with some kind of cereal food and fruit, but no meat. At dinner he ate pretty much what other people ate. His evening meal, when he did not dine late, was much the same as his breakfast. He drank sparingly of anything stronger than water. He avoided all condiments, he used neither tea nor coffee, and held tobacco in abhorrence. I remember the time when he could not stay in a room infected with the fumes of tobacco, though later in life he became less sensitive to its effects. He rarely allowed himself to be out of bed after ten at night, or in bed after five in the morning. To these habits and regimen he said he attributed in a great measure his exceptionally good health. Not many weeks before his death, and when recovering from a slight indisposition which he had been describing to me (he was then approaching his eighty-fourth year), I said, "I presume you have reduced your allowance of morning gymnastics." "Not the width of your thumb nail," was his prompt reply. "What," said I, "do you manage still 'to put in' your hour and a half every morning?" "Yes," he replied, "and sometimes more; frequently more." This I have always regarded as a signal triumph of character. As the glaciers testify to the almost incalculable power of the sun which piles them upon the peaks of the loftiest mountains, so this

resolute and conscientious prosecution of a toil which directly furthered no personal or worldly end, which added nothing of value to his stock of knowledge, which gratified neither his own nor any other person's vanity or ambition, which deprived him of a good proportion of the best working hours of his day, testified with unimpeachable authority to the heroic moral forces of which his will, his tastes, his ambition, were always the patient and cheerful instruments. It was the foot of Hercules. When you reflect to what precious uses, to what rare delights he could have consecrated these morning hours, had he felt at liberty to so divert them; and when you consider how few there are who can forego their cigar, their glass of wine or any other customary indulgence, even after they have become aware that its effects upon them are pernicious; how rare it is to find a man engaged in intellectual pursuits, who will take the exercise which he knows that he requires, though already consciously a prey to disease from neglect of it, you will scarcely accuse me of exaggerating the importance of the incident to which I have referred, nor deny that it represents a quality of heroism much easier to admire than to imitate, and which is only exhibited by characters of the most symmetrical mould.

BRYANT had a marvellous memory. His familiarity

with the English poets was such that when at sea, where he was always too ill to read much, he would beguile the time by reciting page after page from favorite poems. He assured me that, however long the voyage, he had never exhausted his resources. I once proposed to send for a copy of a magazine in which a new poem of his was announced to appear. "You need not send for it," said he, "I can give it to you." "Then you have a copy with you," said I. "No," he replied, "but I can recall it," and thereupon proceeded immediately to write it out. I congratulated him upon having such a faithful memory. "If allowed a little time," he replied, "I could recall every line of poetry I have ever written." Yet he rarely quoted, and never in a foreign tongue. This is the more noticeable as he was scarcely less familiar with the languages and literatures of Germany, France and Spain; of ancient and modern Greece and of ancient and modern Rome than with that of his own country, and he spoke all of those that are now classed among the living languages, except the modern Greek, with considerable facility and surprising correctness.

He rated his memory at its true value and never abused it. It was a blooded steed which he never degraded to the uses of a pack horse. Hence he was fastidious about his reading as about his company.

believing there was no worse thief than a bad book ; but he never tired of writers who have best stood the test of time. He had little taste for historical reading. Indeed the habits of his mind were not at all in sympathy with the inductive method of reaching new truths or propagating them. He often deplored the increasing neglect of the old English classics, which our modern facilities for printing were displacing. Johnson's lives of the poets was one of his favorite books. Pope, who has educated more poets in the art of verse making than any other modern author, was, from his early youth, his pocket companion. I think he had studied him more carefully than any other English writer, and was specially impressed by his wit.

One day as I was looking over the books on the shelves of his library at Roslyn, he called my attention to his position. "There," said he, "I have fallen quite accidentally into the precise attitude in which Pope is commonly represented, with his forehead resting on his fingers." He then got up to look for an illustration among his books. He did not find what he sought, but he brought two other editions, each representing Pope with an abundance of hair on his head, one an old folio containing a collection of Pope's verses, written before he was twenty-five years of age.

I asked him if he had seen the new edition of Pope's works which Elwin was editing. He said he had not, nor heard of it. I then told him that Elwin left Pope scarcely a single estimable personal quality, and had stripped him of a good share of the literary laurels which he had hitherto worn in peace. He promptly said that he did not care to see it; that he was not disposed to trust such a judgment, however ingeniously defended. He then quoted Young's lines on Pope, "Sweet as his own Homer, his life melodious as his verse." That, said he, is the judgment of a contemporary. He then read some lines from other poets in farther defence of his favorite. He was unwilling to have his idea of Pope disturbed, and when I suggested that he should get Elwin, he said, "No, I want no better edition than Warburton's, the edition that was in my father's library, and which I read when a boy." BRYANT's admiration of Pope is the more remarkable, as two characters more unlike could not be readily imagined.

No prose writer since Queen Anne's period received from him such frequent commendation as Southey, whose prose seemed to have impressed him more than his poetry. He shared little of the popular enthusiasm for Macauley. I don't remember to have heard him ever cite a line or an opinion of Byron,

who was never one of his favorites. Some twenty-five or thirty years ago a person claiming to be a son of the poet appeared in New York with some poems and letters which he said had been written and given him by Byron, and for which he sought to find a market among our publishers. I spoke of the matter one day to BRYANT, and his reply surprised me more than it would have done after my opinions of Byron were more settled. Looking up with an expression which implied more than he uttered, he said, "I think we have poems enough of Byron already."

Horace sought to comfort his friend Mæcenas in a threatening illness by the assurance that he could never survive him. So soon, he said, as you will show me the way, let me be permitted to make the long journey with you. His prayer was not denied him. Within a few days after the decease of that eminent and virtuous statesman, the Roman people were called to the funeral of their greatest poet. It is a pleasing coincidence in the lives of these illustrious bards, in such distant ages born, that BRYANT prayed, and not in vain, that his last hours also might be specially conditioned.

——That when he came to lie
At rest within the ground,
'T were pleasant that in flowery June,
When brooks send up a cheerful sound,
The Sexton's hand, his grave to make,
The rich green mountain-turf should break.

Nor did the coincidence end here. A corresponding aversion to any species of pomp and display at their funeral animated both, and the very words by which Horace expressed his wishes upon this subject, most exactly express the injunction upon that subject imposed upon his family by our American poet.

Absint inani funere nenia,
Luctusque turpes, et querimonie :
Compesce clamorem, ac sepulcri,
Mitte supervacuos honores.*

His wishes were carefully studied. With the simplest ceremonies of the church of which he was at once a pillar and an ornament, conducted by the pastor whose hands had been used to break to him the bread of life, and on one of the loveliest days of flowery June that the sun of Long Island ever shed its golden light upon, his mortal remains were consigned to their last resting-place, beside the tomb of her, whose disembodied spirit

“Lovelier in heaven’s sweet climate, yet the same,”

his had already joined. He seemed to leave this world with no wish, no ambition unsatisfied. His life showed no trace of disappointment. He had never allowed himself to desire what it did not please the Master to send to him, nor to repine for anything that was denied him. “Thy will be done,” was the daily prayer, not only of his lips but of his heart and life.

* Hor. Carm. 2, xvii.

Mr. BRYANT used to say that a gentleman should never talk of his love affairs or of his religion. So far as I know, he practiced as he preached. There was no subject which for many years appeared to occupy more of his thoughts than religion, none about which he seemed more willing to listen, but of his own spiritual experiences he was singularly reticent. I do not remember to have ever heard him define his creed upon any point of theology, or give utterance to a single dogma ; neither do I believe such an utterance can be found in any of his writings ; though so profound were his religious feelings and convictions, that they found expression in a series of exquisite devotional hymns, which I trust may some day be given to the public. In matters of religion, his modesty was as conspicuous as in everything else ; he was never betrayed into citing his own example or his own opinions as an authority to anyone else.

But it may be asked, had this "*monstrum perfectionis*" no faults ? BRYANT was born to the same sinful inheritance as the rest of us ; but I can say of him with perfect truth, that with his faults he was always at war. No one better than he, knew the enemies with which the human heart is always besieged ; the enemies of his own household ; and few men ever fought them more valiantly, more persistently or

more successfully. Those who only knew him in his later years would scarcely believe that he had been endowed by nature with a very quick and passionate temper. He never entirely overcame it, but he held every impulse of his nature to such a rigorous accountability, that few have ever suspected the struggles with which he purchased the self-control which constituted one of the conspicuous graces of his character. BRYANT had his faults, but he made of them agents of purification. He learned from them humility and faith ; a wise distrust of himself, and an unfaltering trust in Him, through whose aid he was strengthened to keep them in abeyance. By God's help he converted the tears of his angels into pearls.

It was this constant and successful warfare upon every unworthy and degrading propensity that sought an asylum in his heart, that made him such a moral force in the country, that invested any occasion to which he lent his presence with an especial dignity ; that gave to his personal example a peculiar power and authority. No one could be much in the society of BRYANT without feeling more respect for himself, without being conscious that his better nature had been awakened to a higher activity ; without an increased reluctance to say or do anything which BRYANT himself under similar circumstances would probably not have said or done.

Though not at all prone to speak of himself or of his own habits or methods of life as a guide for others, the influence of his example had a peculiar efficacy. Like the shadow of St. Peter upon whomsoever it fell it seemed to exert a healing influence. In that bright example he told his people that a life so full of wisdom and virtue, so complete and symmetrical, there is change, there is growth, but there is no death. The attributes of God are imperishable.

POETRY IN THE SCHOOL CLASS

XXXXXXXXXXXX

It is a good thing that we do
 Where there is Death, so we can find life
 When the things of earth are dead and gone
 And the things of heaven are still to be seen
 When the things of earth are dead and gone
 Lay 'neath the wings of the angels of heaven
 To the land where the angels of heaven
 And the angels of heaven are still to be seen
 Not will come without the angels of heaven
 Lay 'neath the wings of the angels of heaven
 For sleep and death are one to them, but we
 Who love them and survive them, we know not
 The places they once lived in, we know not
 For whom a light has come out of the night
 A shadow fallen on a cloudy day
 Who love our dead, Death always comes too soon
 A consolation and a lamentation

The sorrow of all sorrows, till in turn
We follow them, and others mourn for us.

This tragic lesson of mortality
The Master who hath left us learned in youth,
When the Muse found him wandering by the stream
That sparkled, singing, at his father's door
The first Muse whom the New World, loving long,
Wooded in the depths of her old solitude,
The green, untrodden, world wide wilderness
Surrendered to the soul of this young man
The secret of its silence. Centuries passed ;
The red man chased the deer, and tracked the bear
To his high mountain den — but he came not.
The white man followed ; the great woods were felled,
And in the clearings cottage smokes arose,
And fields were white with harvests : he came not.
The New World waited for him, and the words
Which should disburden the dumb mystery
That darkened its strange life when summer days
Steeped the green boughs with light, and winter nights
Looked down like Death upon the dead, old world ;
For what was Earth but the great tomb of man,
And suns and planets but sepulchral urns
Filled with the awful ashes of the Past ?

Such was the first sad message to mankind
 Of this young poet, who was never young,
 So heavily the old burden of the Earth
 Weighed on his soul from boyhood. Yet not less,
 Not less, but more, he loved her ; for if she
 Was sombre with her secret she was still
 Beautiful as a goddess ; and if he
 Should one day look upon her face no more,
 He would not cease to look till that day came :
 For he for life was dedicate to her,
 The inspiration of his earliest song,
 The happy memory of his sterner years,
 The consolation of his ripe, old age.
 What she was to the eyes of lesser men,
 Which only glance at the rough husk of things,
 She never was to him ; but day and night
 A loveliness, a night, a mystery,
 A Presence never wholly understood,
 The broken shadow of some unknown Power,
 Which overflows all forms, but is not Form
 The inscrutable Spirit of the Universe !
 High priest whose temple was the woods, he felt
 Their melancholy grandeur, and the awe
 That ancientness and solitude beget,
 Strange intimations of invisible things,
 Which, while they seem to sadden, give delight,

And hurt not, but persuade the soul to prayer :
 For, silent in the barren ways of men,
 Under green roofs of overhanging boughs,
 Where the Creator's hands are never stayed,
 The soul recovers her forgotten speech,
 The lost religion of her infancy.

Nature hath sacred seasons of her own,
 And reverent poets to interpret them.
 But she hath other singers, unto whom
 The twinkle of a dew-drop in the grass,
 The sudden singing of an unseen bird,
 The pensive brightness of the evening star,
 Are revelations of a loveliness
 For which there is no language known to man,
 Except the eloquent language of the eye,
 Hushed with the fulness of her happiness !
 What may be known of these recondite things
 Our grave, sweet poet knew : for unto him
 The Goddess of the Earth revealed herself
 As to no other poet of the time,
 Save only him who slumbers at Grasmere,
 His Brother,—not his Master. From the hour
 When first he wandered by his native stream
 To crop the violets growing on its banks,

And list to the brown thrasher's vernal hymn,
 To the last hour of his long, honored life,
 He never faltered in his love of Nature.
 Recluse with men, her dear society,
 Welcome at all times, savored of content,
 Brightened his happy moments, and consoled
 His hours of gloom. A student of the woods
 And of the fields, he was their calendar,—
 Knew when the first pale wind-flower would appear,
 And when the last wild-fowl would take its flight ;
 Where the cunning squirrel had his granary,
 And where the industrious bee had stored her sweets.
 Go where he would, he was not solitary,
 Flowers nodded gayly to him—wayside brooks
 Slipped by him laughingly, while the emulous birds
 Showered lyric raptures that provoked his own.
 The winds were his companions on the hills—
 The clouds, and thunders—and the glorious Sun,
 Whose bright beneficence sustains the world,—
 A visible symbol of the Omnipotent,
 Whom not to worship were to be more blind
 Than those of old who worshipped stocks and stones.

Who loves and lives with Nature tolerates
 Baseness in nothing ; high and solemn thoughts

Are his,—clean deeds and honorable life.
If he be poet, as our Master was,
His song will be a mighty argument,
Heroic in its structure to support
The weight of the world forever ! All great things
Are native to it, as the Sun to Heaven.
Such was thy song, O Master ! and such fame
As only the kings of thought receive, is thine ;
Be happy with it in thy larger life
Where Time is not, and the sad word—Farewell !

POEM BY E. C. STEDMAN.

THE DEATH OF BRYANT.

How was it then with Nature when the soul

Of her own poet heard a voice which came
From out the void, "Thou art no longer lent
To Earth!" when that incarnate spirit, blent
With the abiding force of waves that roll,

Wind-cradled vapors, circling stars that flame,

She did recall? How went

His antique shade, beacons upon its way
Through the still aisles of night to universal day?

Her voice it was, her sovereign voice, which bade

The Earth resolve his elemental mould;

And once more came her summons: "Long, too long,
Thou lingerest, and charmest with thy song!

Return! return!" Thus Nature spoke, and made

Her sign; and forthwith on the minstrel old

An arrow, bright and strong,

Fell from the bent bow of the answering Sun,
 Who cried, " The song is closed, the invocation done!"

But not as for those youths dead ere their prime,
 New-entered on their music's high domain,
 Then snatched away, did all things sorrow own :
 No utterance now like that sad sweetest tone
 When Bion died, and the Sicilian rhyme
 Bewailed; no sobbing of the reeds that plain,
 Rehearsing some last moan
 Of Lycidas; no strains which skyward swell
 For Adonais still, and still for Astrophel!

The Muses wept not for him as for those
 Of whom each vanished like a beauteous star
 Quenched ere the shining midwatch of the night ;
 The greenwood Nymphs mourned not his lost delight,
 Nor Echo, hidden in the tangled close,
 Grieved that she could not mimic him afar.
 He ceased not from our sight
 Like him who, in the first glad flight of Spring,
 Fell as an eagle pierced with shafts from his own wing.

This was not Thyrsis! no, the minstrel lone
 And reverend, the woodland singer hoar,
 Who was dear Nature's nursling, and the priest
 Whom most she loved; nor had his office ceased
 But for her mandate: "Seek again thine own;
 The walks of men shall draw thy steps no more!"
 Softly, as from a feast
 The guest departs that hears a low recall,
 He went, and left behind his harp and coronal.

"*Return!*" she cried, "unto thine own return!
 Too long the pilgrimage; too long the dream
 In which, lest thou shouldst be companionless,
 Unto the oracles thou hadst access,—
 The sacred groves that with my presence yearn."
 The voice was heard by mountain, dell, and
 stream,
 Meadow and wilderness,—
 All fair things vested by the changing year,
 Which now awoke in joy to welcome one most dear.

"*He comes!*" declared the unseen ones that haunt
 The dark recesses, the infinitude
 Of whispering old oaks and sighing pines.
 "*He comes!*" the warders of the forest shrines

Sang joyously, “ His spirit ministrant
 Henceforth with us shall walk the underwood,
 Till mortal ear divines
 Its music added to our choral hymn,
 Rising and falling far through archways deep and dim ! ”

The orchard fields, the hill-side pastures green,
 Put gladness on ; the rippling harvest-wave
 Ran like a smile, as if a moment there
 His shadow poised in the midsummer air
 Above ; the cataract took a pearly sheen
 Even as it leapt ; the winding river gave
 A sound of welcome where
 He came, and trembled, far as to the sea
 It moves from rock-ribbed heights where its dark
 fountains be.

His presence brooded on the rolling plain,
 And on the lake there fell a sudden calm, —
 His own tranquillity ; the mountain bowed
 Its head, and felt the coolness of a cloud,
 And murmured, “ *He is passing !* ” and again
 Through all its firs the wind swept like a psalm ;
 Its eagles, thunder-browed,

In that mist-moulded shape their kinsman knew,
 And circled high, and in his mantle soared from view.

So drew he to the living veil, which hung
 Of old above the deep's unimaged face,
 And sought his own. Henceforward he is free
 Of vassalage to that mortality
 Which men have given a sepulchre among
 The pathways of their kind, a resting-place
 Where, bending one great knee,
 Knelt the proud mother of a mighty land
 In tenderness, and came anon a pluméd band.

Came one by one the Seasons, meetly drest,
 To sentinel the relics of their seer,
 First Spring – upon whose head a wreath was set
 Of wind-flowers and the yellow violet
 Advanced. Then Summer led his loveliest
 Of months, one ever to the minstrel dear
 (Her sweet eyes dewy wet),
 June, and her sisters, whose brown hands entwine
 The brier-rose and the bee-haunted columbine.

Next, Autumn, like a monarch sad of heart,

Came, tended by his melancholy days.

Purple he wore, and bore a golden rod,

His sceptre ; and let fall upon the sod

A lone fringed-gentian ere he would depart.

Scarce had his train gone darkling down the ways

When Winter thither trod,—

Winter, with beard and raiment blown before,

That was so seeming like our poet old and hoar.

What forms are these amid the pageant fair

Harping with hands that falter? What sad throng?

They wait in vain, a mournful brotherhood,

And listen where their laurelled elder stood

For some last music fallen through the air.

“ What cold, thin atmosphere now hears thy song? ”

They ask, and long have wooed

The woods and waves that knew him, but can learn

Naught save the hollow, haunting cry, “ *Return ! re-
turn !* ”

MEMORIAL MEETING

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT



“THE CENTURY”









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